

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 L-02 EB-07 ABF-01 OMB-01

TRSE-00 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 AID-05

H-02 AGR-05 IGA-01 /064 W
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P 081200Z MAY 75 ZFF1

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2708

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1464

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, CE

SUBJ: FINANCE MINISTER'S CHARGES: EMBASSY PRESS
STATEMENT

REF: STATE 106790

1. I SAW ACTING PRIME MINISTER MAITHRIPALA SENANAYEKE AT NOON MAY 8 TO DISUCSS EMBASSY'S PROPOSED STATEMENT DENYING MISUE OF PL-480 RUPEES (REFTEL). HE AGAIN HAD WITH HIM THREE-MAN SUPPORTING STAFF: MDFA SECRETARY JAYASINGHE, PRIME MINISTERJS SECRETARY PIERIS, AND, THIS TIME, MDFA DIRECTOR GENERAL BASNAYAKE. I SAID DEPT HAD ENDORSED MY EARLIER REPRESENTATIONS TO HIM, INCLUDING REQUEST FOR GSL CORRECTIVE STATEMENT, AND NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR KANAKARATNE WAS BEING CALLED IN TO underscore USG'S displeasure at FINANCE EKINISTER PERERA'S REMARKS.

2. I THEN SHOWED SENANAYEKE AND HIS COLLEAGUES DEPT'S PROPOSED STATEMENT, WITH WHICH THEY HAD NO PROBLEM, AND SAID WE WERE PLANNING TO RELEASE IT FOR FOLLOWING DAY'S PAPER. HE AGREED TO MY REQUEST THAT STATEMENT

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BE FORWARDED TO PRIME MINISTER.

3. ALTHOUGH AS USUAL CORDIAL AND SEEMINGLY COOPERATIVE, SENANAYEKE NONETHELESS CONTINUED TO DEMONSTRATE UNEASINESS IN DEALING WITH THIS PROBLEM IN ABSENCE PRIME MINISTER, EXPLAINING THAT HE WAS ONLY "IN LOCUS PARENTIS". I RECALLED PERERA'S ORIGINAL CHARGES REMAINED ON RECORD, AND HAD NOT BEEN REFUTED DURING PERERA-JAYEWARDENE PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE. I HOPED WE COULD GET SOME HELP FROM SENANAYEKE IN INSURING THAT EMBASSY STATEMENT RECEIVED FAIR PLAY IN SRILANKA MEDIA, INCLUDING RADIO. HE SAID HE WOULD SEE WHAT HE COULD DO. JAYASINGHE TELEPHONED LATER TO SAY THAT THEY HAD TALKED TO A.K. PREMADASA, CHAIRMAN OF LAKE HOUSE GROUP WHICH CONTROLS "DAILY NEWS".

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY'S PROPOSED TEXT WAS DESIGNED TO ANSWER NUMBER OF QUESTIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED RE SPECIFIC FACTS AND FIGURES RELATING TO PERERA'S ALLEGATIONS AND NATURE OF OUR RESPONSE. DEPT'S ABBREVIATED TEXT IS WELL-DESIGNED TO SERVE PURPOSE OF SHORT, EFFECTIVE, AND UNCONTENTIOUS REJOINDER AND WILL HELP TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT IN GENERAL TERMS. WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT, EVEN WITH OUR ENCOURAGEMENT, IT IS UNLIKELY GSL WILL SATISFACTORILY REBUT DETAILS OF PERERA'S MISREPRESENTATIONS. IN ANY EVENT, WE SHALL CONTINUE TO DO SO OURSELVES THROUGH EMBASSY'S CONTACTS WITH GSL OFFICIALS, PRESS, AND PUBLIC.

5. REQUEST HAS BEEN MADE FOR APPOINTMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER SHORTLY AFTER SHE RETURNSHE VAN HOLLEN

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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